Let Us go Forth.

Silent, like men in solemn haste,
Girded wayfarers of the waste,
We pass out at the world's wide gate,
Turning our backs on all its state;
We pass along the narrow road
That leads to life, to bliss, to God.

Sponges.

The sponge has become a household article so universally known, that a minute description of it, to answer our purpose, is not at all necessary. Webster defines it as a porous or fibrous substance adhering to rocks, shells, etc; grows in the water and thrives best in salt-water. They are now put to a variety of uses, for which they answer admirably. One of their most notable qualities is that of absorption. Their porosity is very great. This, in connection with their possibilities of expansion, admit them of becoming the repository of a large, amount of outside matter. These are essential features to their usefulness. Another important feature about the common sponge is the ease with which it can be made to discharge the matter that is contained within.

But there are other kinds of sponges we wish to speak of more especially, we mean human sponges.

Webster defines one class of these sponges as, "One who lives on others;" those who are everlastingly receivers, but non-producers. These are largely porous with capacious powers of absorbtion but you can get nothing out of them. They are parasitical scavengers that cumber the world, seemingly without any use whatever. They are not God's ideal of a man, but a kind of a human monstrosity and a child of sin. A non-producer, God has said, shall not eat. In this world of action and responsibilities, there are no places for such beings. They are cumberers of the ground, and their timely removal would leave no vacancy.

Another class of human sponges is represented by the money-lover or covetous man. This class is largely represented, and to their spongy receptiveness there is no limit. They accumulate and brood over it as the hen doth over her eggs, with the hope, seemingly, that from the dollar will be hatched its hundreds, and from the golden eagle its thousands. Commonly speaking we call such persons misers or hoarders. They hoard to keep and every dollar that gets into their fingers, for the time being, is lost to the commercial world. They go into an iron chest that robbers or death alone opens. A considerable number of these sponges would absorb the business interests of the country and make it bankrupt. Fortunately for common humanity, death loosens these sponges from their rocks, when their retention is lost and the captive eagles are set free. Every city and town of any considerable size, is suffering from these human sponges. Of all men, of respectable positions in life, they are most to be pitied, as for them there is positvely no hope, and angels weep over the sad spectacle.

Brethren it is greatly to be feared that we have some of these sponges among us. God has given them large accumulative capacities, and eagerly receive everything that is afforded, but unlike the sponge, notning can be squeezed out of them. Even the Lord's truth is carefully locked up. Appeals for the poor, for the church, for missions and for charitable institutions have no effect on them whatever. Oh! how sad it is that men forget that God is the Giver, and that the giving is for the bettering of our fellows, and the salvation of souls.

Then, we have the literary or educational sponges. And they are more of these sponges than people ordinarily suppose. They too are great receivers, but poor givers. They recive learning on about the same principle that the miser receives money, for the love of it, and not to do good with it. They possess a great deal of information, of light, but it is concealed under the bushel. We heard a brother say, not long since, that in the city in which he lives, there are men who walk the streets every day, having rare literary attainments, yet they are not known as such outside of their own homes and perhaps a few intimate friends. All the knowledge they possess is as useless to the world as the dollars, eagles, and crowns in the miser's chest. They receive, but give not, and therefore are but little benefit to the world.

God has given us talents for use, and the more we acquire, the greater become our responsibilities. To eat, drink, and enjoy is not the recognized type of true manhood, and much less the type of the true Christian. There are a number of other classes of human sponges that might be named, but we shall notice only one more--the religious sponge. To receive religion or religious instruction, seems, at first thought, to be a desirable trait of character, but even in this it is possible to be wrong. Giving and receiving, to be profitable, must always go together. Grace, like money, can do us no good unless we use it and give it to others—the giver, to continue must be a receiver, and the receiver, to be blessed, must be a giver. True religion is not receiving, but doing. Religious receivers are found everywhere, but religious givers and doers are not so generally found.

Some men go to church as the glutton goes to his table, to be fed, to surfeit, to enjoy without any thought whatever of growing or gaining strength, for profitable labor. Nothing beyond self-gratification is ever thought of. Spiritual food thus received is wasted, is lost in the unyielding sponge. Many of our congregations have in them these sponges. They are good sitters and good hearers but this is all the good that can be said of them They are as cold as icebergs and as immovable as the rocks of Gibraltar. They come and go as the door swings on its hinges, and you may preach to them till doomsday without any perceptible change, and the chances are as good to convert the seat as the occupant.

Not long since we read of a minister who preached for a strange congregation. In front of him sat a lady as still and as upright as a post, and as he noticed her receptive capacity he grew eloquent. He felt that he had, at least, one good hearer, and this is more than every preacher gets, so that his soul was encouraged. In the evening he preached to the same congregation, and his hope was that he might have the same lady auditor. She was there in the same place, and gave the same attention to the word preached. He became so interested in her that he determined to learn her name, and make her acquaintance. After services he hailed a good sister and inquired who the lady was that sat in front of him and gave such good attention to his preaching. Said the sister, "You mean the lady with the dark bonnet and blue dress? O! she is a sponge—a sponge." "A sponge you say; what do you mean?" "I mean she is like a sponge. She has been occupying that seat for years, ever hearing, and that is all it amounts to. All her hearing seems to do her no good. She is the same cold-hearted woman she was ten years ago, and is so hopelessly dead to everything else but herself, that it is expected she will continue to be a hearer only as long as she lives."

Dear reader, do you know of any such human sponges? There are more of them than you may think. When you again hear the gospel preached, ask yourself what use you will make of the instructions received. By a little of this kind of self-examination you will be enabled to know whether or not you have been playing a religious sponge.

JACOB S. CLAPPER.

Louisville, Ohio., Mar. 12, 1886.

Parvum in Multo.

"DOCTRINAL PREACHING."

BY NOSAM.

I notice that "Doctrinal preaching" is occupying the thoughts of some of our worthy brethren. It is good that it is so. For the church of the living God cannot perform her duty without letting the world know the principles on which she is founded. But may I not meekly inquire, what do the brethren mean by "Doctrine?" I am afraid that there is danger in giving this word a narrow meaning to be found nowhere but in a Dunkard dictionary. We have talked about "doctrine" so much that many think that it refers to nothing but the ordinances of Baptism, Feetwashing and Lord's Supper. And when so much stress is made on "Doctrinal preaching," and by this it is generally understood that we mean only the ordinances, the great danger is that people are led to believe that we think that Christianity only consists of the observance of the ordinances.

Brethren do not circumscribe the doctrine of our Blessed Lord into such narrow limits. Preach "doctrine," earnestly and completely. Let every sermon bristle with the doctrine of the Gospel. The greatest sermon ever preached on earth by the greatest preacher this world ever saw, does not contain one single word about the ordinances. Some brethren will argue that they were not yet instituted. Yes baptism had been introduced and instituted and even baptism is not mentioned in this great sermon as recorded in 5th, 6th and 7th chapters of Matthew.

I truly believe that this kind of "Doctrinal preaching," narrows down the souls of men to very small proportions, and has the tendency to make us exclusive, if not bigotted and self-righteous. This was the rock that split the old church so terribly. This kind of preaching was about all we heard. The ability of the preacher, and the sermon itself, was always judged according to the amount of Baptism, Feetwashing, and Lord's Supper it contained. This eventually, brought forth exclusiveness, in its ugliest form; and this exclusiveness gave birth to uniformity. This kind of thing continued until justice, mercy and love was buried under a pile of "doctrines" that did not make those who preached, believed and practiced them any better than other people, and in many thousands of instances not as good. *Are we going to follow in the same rut, and reach the same end?*

We surely ought to be warned by the result of such Doctrinal preaching. The Scribes and Pharisees were just such a set of Doctrinal preachers, laying such great stress on the outward rites, and eventually they crucified the Lord. There surely was a beginning to such a course, it did not reach such a climax in a day or a year. Then let us be warned by such terrible examples, lest we become exclusive.

Do not we delight in the name of Progressive Christians? Do we not preach that men should "go on unto perfection?" Then let us remember that the primary object in Christ's incarnation was to save men from sin. This is the foundation of Christian work. The ordinances are only to quicken our spiritual life, and are the means by which we are drawn to God. If the ordinances do not make us any better than other Christians, what good have the performance of them been to us? Let the good and beauty of our ordinances be seen in the consistent purity of our lives. That is the best way in which they can be preached.

Are the ordinances of the Lord's house so vague and dark in the Gospel, that they need to be pillowed and bolstered up by continual preaching upon them? To undertake so much pains to *prove* what we term to be *undeniable facts*, shows a weakness on our part in my estimation. I know in the old church, more trouble and care was taken to have people indoctrinated into the ordinances, than to have them live pure lives. Many inconsistencies today are winked at, because the culprits are "sound in the doctrine." Many of the leaders of the old church loom up before me now, that were noted for their "doctrinal preaching," and latterly for their rascality and impurity. Again brethren let us beware how we interpret the word "doctrine." On what authority do we limit the doctrines of the Gospel to the outward ordinances?

The same may be said about "commandments." This word too has a peculiar Dunkard meaning. We talk sometimes about the "commandments" of our Lord, as if he did not command anything but Baptism, feetwashing and the Lord's Supper.

It is all right that the people should know these things but beware how we make hobbies of them.

As a supplement to the above, I clip the following from the *Gospel Messenger*, written by Geo. L. Studebaker of Shideler, Ind. It carries with it its own lesson.

"In attending a communion meeting not long since, in the evening, before the supper and communion services, the subject of examination was treated by two worthy brethren, and the manner of dress and covering came under their notice. We had a very good lesson presented to us and were pleased with the wholesome instruction given us by our brethren. We stayed all night in the small town near by. The next morning we met our brethren, who had admonished us so particularly not to "be conformed to the world." One was smoking a pipe and the other a cigar."